

### *Legislation is Expected to Be One of First Bills President Obama Signs into Law*

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today helped the House pass a bill that renews, improves, and expands the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The bill preserves health coverage for the 7 million children from modest-income homes who are currently enrolled in SCHIP and extends coverage to 4 million uninsured children who are eligible for the health care program, but not enrolled. In 2007, 651,853 New York children were enrolled in SCHIP. The bill passed today is expected to add an additional 350,000 New York children to the program.

"In a country as great as ours, no one, especially children, should ever have to go without health care coverage," Hinchey said. "The bill we passed in the House today extends and improves a strong program that has provided health care insurance to millions of children from modest-income households over the past decade. At a time when the cost of living continues to soar and when more and more parents are losing their jobs and the health care benefits that come with those jobs, SCHIP is desperately needed to relieve modest-income families of the financial and emotional stress that comes with finding ways to pay for health care coverage for their children."

The bill Hinchey helped pass today invests billions in new funding over five years in order to strengthen the program's financing; increase health care coverage for low-income, uninsured children; and improve the quality of health care children receive. Two-thirds of uninsured children are currently eligible for coverage through SCHIP or Medicaid – but better outreach and adequate funding are needed to identify and enroll them. This bill gives states the resources and incentives necessary to reach and cover millions of uninsured children who are eligible for, but not enrolled in, SCHIP and Medicaid.

Additionally, the bill ensures that quality dental coverage will now be provided to all children enrolled in SCHIP. The bill also ensures that states will offer mental health services on par with medical and surgical benefits covered under SCHIP. The measure also provides \$100 million in grants for new outreach activities to states, local governments, schools, community-based organizations, safety-net providers and others. Also, the bill establishes a new initiative to develop and implement pediatric health quality measures and improve state reporting of quality data.

SCHIP was created in 1997 to provide health care coverage for children in families that earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but not enough to afford private insurance. The program has been a successful and cost-effective way of providing health care to children.